

ramify it, split it into hairs, and twist its texts till they cover the •divine morality of its author with mysteries, and require a priesthood *to* explain them. * * * So the printers can never leave us in a state of perfect rest and union of opinion. They would be no longer useful and would have to go to the plough. (To Elbridge Gerry, 1801. F. VIII., 42.)

NEWSPAPERS.—The basis of our government being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive these papers and be capable of reading them. (To Edward Carrington, written from Paris, 1787. F. IV., 360.)

NEWSPAPERS.—To your request of my opinion of the manner in which, a newspaper should be conducted, so as to be most useful, I should answer, "by restraining it to true facts and sound principles only/" Yet I fear such a paper would find few subscribers. It is a melancholy truth, that a suppression of the press could not more completely deprive the nation of its benefits, than is done by its abandoned prostitution to falsehood. Nothing can now be believed which is seen in a newspaper. Truth itself becomes suspicious by being put into that polluted vehicle. The real extent of this state of misinformation is known only to those who are in situations to¹ confront facts within their knowledge with the lies of the day. I really look with commiseration over the great body of my fellow citizens who, reading newspapers, live and die in the belief that they have known something of what has been passing in the world in their time; whereas, the accounts they have read in newspapers are just as true a history of any other period of the world as of the present, except that the real names of the day are affixed to their fables. General facts may indeed be collected from them, such as that Europe is now at war, that Bonaparte has been a successful warrior, that he has subjected a great portion of Europe to his will, etc., etc.; but no details can be relied upon. I will add, that the man who never looks into a